DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 127 JC 900 115

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TITLE Critical Success Factors for the North Carolina Community College System. A Background Paper.
INSTITUTION North Carolina State Dept. of Community Colleges, Raleigh. Div. of Planning and Research Services.
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; *Community Colleges; *Educational Objectives; Evaluation Criteria; Organizational Effectiveness; Organizational Objectives; Outcomes of Education; Role of Education; State Boards of Education; State School District Relationship; *Success; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *North Carolina

ABSTRACT

In response to legislative mandate, the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges developed a list of Critical Success Factors (CSF) to help define statewide measures of accountability for all community colleges. Developed by staff members of the State Board with input from the state's community college presidents, the CSFs emphasize statewide goals; accessible, results-oriented factors; and multiple measures. The CSFs are designed to measure how well the system is addressing the goals set by the State Board and how well the system is doing its job as assigned by law. To determine the success of the state's community college system, departmental staff will compile data for five years on six CSF measures: (1) quality of teaching and support services; (2) access/serving the underserved; (3) strong partnership with public schools and universities/transfer performance; (4) helping business and industry/economic development; (5) community service related programs, courses, and student participation; and (6) accountability and flexibility in funding. Notes on the critical success factors are appended. (WJT)

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CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

A Background Paper

JC900115

N.C. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
PLANNING SERVICES SECTION
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OCTOBER, 1989

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CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Beginning with Tennessee in 1975-76, two-thirds of the states have passed laws requiring colleges and universities to examine and measure their outcomes, often linking funding in some way to those measures. In its 1989 session, the North Carolina General Assembly adopted a provision which mandated that:

> "The State Board of Community Colleges shall develop a 'Critical Success Factors' list to define statewide measures of accountability for all community colleges. Each college shall develop an institutional effectiveness plan, tailored to the specific mission of the college. This plan shall be consistent with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools criteria and provide for collection of data as required by the 'Critical Success Factors' list."

The colleges, in turn, are granted a greater degree of flexibility in deciding how to use their state funds.

This special provision is neither the first nor the last state initiative linking flexibility in the use of funds with required accountability measures. Its requirements leave in the hands of the State Board and the colleges the identification of the key factors that will be measured and the specific approach that will be taken to measure them. However, the General Assembly clearly expected action to be taken immediately, and required semiannual reports on the progress of the "Critical Success Factors" and the institutional effectiveness plans.

Defining the Critical Success Factors

"The key things that must go right for the system to flourish and achieve its goals."

A simple definition of "critical success factors" is that they are "key things that must go right for the system to flourish and achieve its goals." When these factors are measured, it will provide a way of showing how well the system is doing its job as assigned by law and how well the system is addressing the goals set by the State Board of Community Colleges.

The critical success factors to be developed by the State Board are to measure the system, not individual colleges per se. However, it is clear that they are to provide for comparative analysis, at least by types of institutions, and that many of them will have to be measured by compiling data on institutional performance. For example, the number served in literacy programs at each institution will have to be compiled to get the system total.

Still, the critical success factors compiled for assessing the performance of the system will not be exactly suitable for measurement of any institution. For example, expenditures per FTE is a figure that helps system leaders compare our system with others, but its level at any institution is determined by the success of the system in securing state funds.

Uses for Critical Success Factors:

- **Accountability**
- **Development of Strategic Goals**
- **Improvement of Programs and Administration**

Measurements of the attainment of critical success factors are an important part of the evaluation phase of the planning cycle, but other assessment methods also need to be pursued. These include program and institutional effectiveness reviews of many types which can be, and are, designed and conducted at the campus level, as well as statewide studies which can address problems both qualitatively and quantitatively and in greater depth.

Development of Critical Success Factors for the North Carolina Community College System

Even though the legislatively mandated deadline was short, it was determined that as many people as possible should be involved in developing the first set of critical success factors and measures. Staff of the Department of Community Colleges drew up an initial list, circulated it to the Presidents' Association (particularly the Finance and Program Committees), asked them to involve their staffs in responding, and revised it based on their comments. It was reviewed for technical feasibility (Can we collect this data by next June?) and submitted to the system level planning committee for further revision. This revision was once again circulated to the presidents.

Several principles guided the development of the critical success factors. First, the factors clearly had to come from the goals adopted by the State Board in the system plan and the Commission on the Future report. Second, it was determined that the factors and measures must be simple enough to be accessible to the audience of legislators, board members and the public who need the insights that the factors will provide. Third, every effort would be made to define measures of results rather than resources or characteristics. And finally, there must be multiple measures. One set of data should not be the basis for making broad judgments.

Principles for Development of Critical Success Factors:

- **Understandable**
- **Results-oriented**
- **Multiple measures**
- **System level**
- **Reportable in 1990 with currently gathered data**

Similar programs undertaken by other states, colleges and groups were used as models. In particular, the approaches taken by De Anza and Midlands Community Colleges, the Maryland Performance Profile, and the Institutional Effectiveness Indicators prepared by the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges were especially helpful. North Carolina has adopted the matrix format of the National Alliance to graphically display the set of factors chosen.

The critical success factors were adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges in July, 1989. A matrix showing the factors and measures is attached.

Compiling the Data

In this initial year, a commitment was made that since resources for data collection at the campus level are already strained, no measures requiring additional surveys or data collection at the college level would be selected. It was felt, however, that some measures are so important to any real attempt to assess success that their absence compromises the result. Yet, some of these measures are not possible within the present capacity of the system to measure. These are shown on the matrix, but in italics. Their presence serves to illustrate the importance of securing the resources to develop the system's information systems.

The matrix is also accompanied by notes which clarify the items, which indicate limitations on the current data collection capability, and identify additional items to be considered for inclusion in the future.

Departmental staff are now compiling a five year history of the measures to the extent that the data exist. This will serve as an indication of what the measures are likely to show when they are officially collected for the first time, and will guide the development of a full report. It is anticipated that the report must include narrative as well as data, and that some further analysis and study will be indicated.

Future Prospects

The development of the critical success factors will aid the State Board of Community Colleges in setting strategic goals for the system. By indicating how the system has performed, and is performing currently in key areas, the factors will provide a foundation for adopting reasonable targets for future efforts.

The critical success factors for the system will provide a model for the individual institutions. The National Alliance Model, which includes a process for developing, validating and revising the chart, is recommended for developing critical success factors relevant to each college's own goals and mission. It is anticipated that the system's critical success factors will be reexamined and modified based on the experience gained this first year. It is clear that as the data base and analytic capacity of the system is improved, more accurate and revealing analysis will be possible.

It is to the interest of the system that the critical success factors provide useful and relevant data to the public, the governing boards and the general assembly. They will reveal ways in which the system can improve and progress, and the leadership of the system can use them for positive change.

Attachment: The critical success factors for the North Carolina Community College System and accompanying notes.

10/89

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND MEASURES

FACTOR I. Quality Teaching and Support Services/Quality	A. Institutional salaries as a percent of the Southeastern regional average (1987-88 as base year for comparison) (89-90 faculty only	B. *Participation in staff development programs*	C. *Persistance of students toward completion of goals*	D. Client satisfaction (through student follow-up surveys)	E. *Number of students returning from previous quarters*	F. Rate of success on licensure exams (where such are required)	G. Number of program reviews and summary of resulting changes
FACTOR II. Access/ SERVING THE UNDERSERVED	A. Enrollment of high school dropouts; handicapped; disadvantaged; single parents; nontraditional high school diploma earners; inmates	B. Number served by type through literacy programs and percent of target population served	C. Number of GED's and AHSD's awarded compared to the number of dropouts statewide	D. *Number and percent of dropouts annually who are served by literacy programs*	E. *Number of students moving from one level of literacy to another*	F. Percent of students receiving financial aid and number receiving aid compared to the number in poverty	
FACTOR III. Strong Partnership with Public Schools, Universities/ EDUCATION CONTINUUM.	A. Number & percent of recent high school graduates enrolled in community college programs	B. Percent of students in the UNC system who attended a community college	C. Number of & enrollment in cooperative agreements with high schools	D. Number of transfers & their performance after two semesters	E. Number of & enrollment in college contractual agreements for college transfer		
FACTOR IV. Helping Business and Industry ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.	A. Number of employers and trainees served by: New & expanding industry, FIT, Small business centers, Apprenticeship programs	B. Number of curriculum program start-ups, terminations, and revisions	C. *Employer satisfaction with graduates (partially available)*				
FACTOR V. COMMUNITY SERVICES	A. Number of courses and programs offered & students enrolled through community services (avocational, practical skills, academic, and cultural/civic)	B. Number of courses offered & students enrolled in (self-supporting) recreational courses	C. Numbers of persons from special populations served by community services funds				
FACTOR VI. Accountability & Flexibility in Funding	A. Annual educational program audit summary--number audited, number of exceptions cited, & types of category	B. Expenditures per FTE	C. Percent of funds expended as allocated				

REVISED 6/29/89

Notes to Accompany
Critical Success Factors Matrix
June 29, 1989

Factor I: Quality

Cell A: Appropriate comparative data on salaries for positions other than faculty (counselor, librarian, etc.) need to be developed so that these salaries can also be reported against a standard.

Cell B: Better measures of effort in personnel development must be identified. These will include data from the staff development plans and additional data collected on efforts funded from other sources (perhaps gathered from the institutions along with data on the activities of college personnel in community service, as suggested below). The ideal measure might be days or hours of renewal activities per employee. The intent of the "advanced degrees awarded" element is to document the attainment of advanced degrees by employees of the system.

Cell C: This element cannot be documented at present. A student tracking system is needed. However, this element is critical to accountability and resources to develop and maintain the student tracking system must be obtained. It was also noted that student goals change, (and the changes may be a positive result of the educational process in themselves) and this must be taken into consideration.

Cell D: The 20 percent sample of students that is now followed up must be expanded. A comprehensive follow-up could also provide data on employment that would document the usefulness of training provided.

Cell E: Additional programming must be done to develop data beyond returnees from the preceding quarter. Occupational extension students should eventually be included.

Cell F: This measure will be supplemented with the "Program Summary Information System" now being developed.

Additional: Comparative cost of programs was suggested as an item. However, this will be part of the program summary information system and may not be appropriate to a critical success factors list.

Factor II: Access/Serving the Underserved

Cell A: The capacity to measure these elements will be part of the MIS in the coming year.

Cell D: The capacity to report this is being developed.

Cell E: More programming will be required to provide this measure.

Additional: It was suggested that measures to reflect geographical access, availability of transportation and child care be developed if possible.

III. Partnerships with Public Schools, Universities/Education Continuum

Cells A and C: Now available
Cells B, and E: Can be developed. Cell D eventually needs to include transfer from contract programs.
Additional: Remediation efforts need to be captured in a measure. Measures should address the numbers of our students who need additional preparation before they can enter a curriculum, and the numbers of students for whom we provide remediation so that they can enter a baccalaureate program in the University system.

Factor IV: Helping Business and Industry/Economic Development

Cell A: Data now available from Program Services.
Cell B: This was intended to capture response to the changing labor market. It was suggested that a measure that would compare program offerings and enrollments to the occupations in demand in North Carolina be developed. Currently the UNCC study is the most readily accessible source of this information, and is not appropriate or available for annual reporting.
Cell C: Many colleges collect this data. There is now no statewide employer follow-up.
Additional: Measures of the impact of skills training on productivity of the labor force and on retraining must be developed. Measures of the effective use of advisory committees and communications with the community should be investigated. The reverse flow of support, such as equipment donations, might also be shown in some fashion.

Factor V: Community Services

Cells A - C: Currently collected through the community service plan.
Additional: Need measure of participation by employees in civic affairs (United Way, other committees). Colleges probably have as part of personnel records.

Measure of use of facilities for civic/cultural events also might be feasible.

Factor VI: Accountability and Flexibility in Funding

Additional: If comparable data for other states or some type of standard can be developed, a comparison of expenditures by category might indicate level of effort (i.e., for library books).

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